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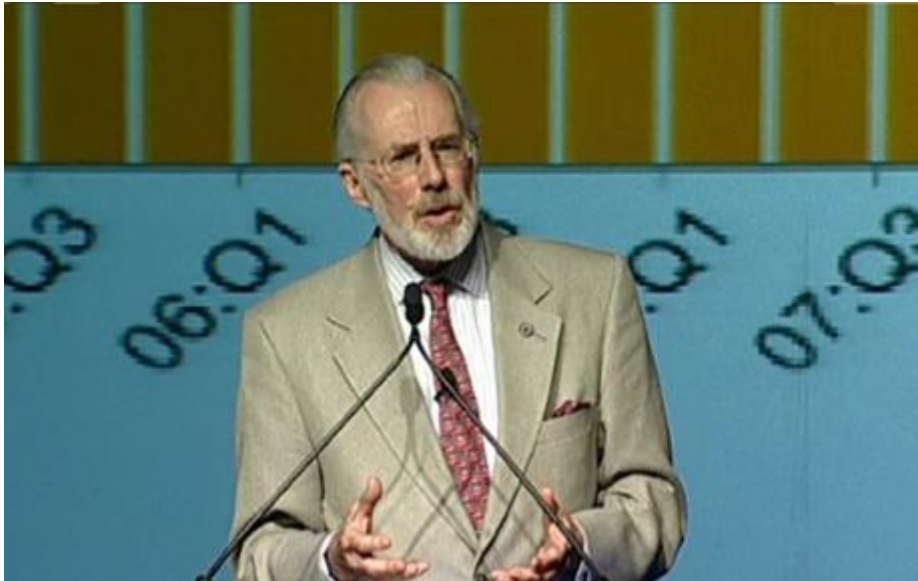
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President Farish Keynotes UBThrive, Inaugural University Business Conference

In front of a crowd of 1,200, President Farish calls for universal access to higher education



June 22, 2015 | Public Affairs Staff

ORLANDO, FLA. – A well-educated citizenry is needed to drive economic prosperity in the United States, and making affordable access to higher education a national priority is imperative.

That's according to remarks from Roger Williams University President Donald J. Farish, delivered on Monday in a keynote speech at UBThrive, a new conference created by *University Business* magazine that gathered 1,200 university leaders together to share business enterprise, student success and executive leadership strategies.

"The big picture here has to do with the economic prosperity of this country," Farish said. "If we think, metaphorically, of America as an automobile, higher education is the gas that makes it go. A well-educated workforce is essential for our long-term prosperity."

Since launching the Affordable Excellence initiative at Roger Williams University in 2012, Farish has become an outspoken proponent of access to, and affordability of, college. Conference organizers invited him to share his expertise and vision for reinventing higher education, and UBThrive Program Director J.D. Solomon introduced him to conference attendees as an expert and innovator in the field.

“There’s a growing number of self-proclaimed experts that concluded higher education in America is broken and that they have the solution to fix it,” Solomon said. “These so-called experts don’t even work in higher ed, but now we’re going to hear from someone who is the expert. Don and his team are what I like to call intrepid innovators.”

Farish’s keynote, titled “Why Higher Education is Under Siege and What We Can and Should Do About It,” analyzed six key factors that have caused the public and media to question the value of a college degree. Some of those factors included rising tuition, student debt and the argument for return on investment, where he debunked the popular belief that college graduates are going straight to Starbucks and McDonalds after college.

The perfect storm of a shrinking college applicant pool, a widening gap in income inequality and dwindling government support for public institutions has created a fierce battleground for colleges, Farish said. This climate has put both universities and college students in a dire situation.

“If you don’t send your child to college, you are dooming that child to a marginal life eking out a living at \$28,000 a year,” Farish said. “If you do send your child to college, that child will be rewarded financially – but not as much as he or she once was, and at much higher cost. That’s a terrible dilemma to put a parent in.”

Farish believes the solution lies in providing universal access to higher education. “All we are doing now is treading water until the country embraces the idea that universal affordable access to higher education is a national priority.”

Watch the full keynote presentation at UBThrive by following [this link](#).